

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 AF-10 AID-20 TRSE-00 EB-11

COME-00 DRC-01 /178 W

----- 017143

R 181230Z OCT 73

FM AMEMBASSY VALLETTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4865

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY ROME

C O N F I D E N T I A L VALLETTA 2066

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MT. UK

SUBJ: BRITISH-MALTESE RELATIONS

REF: VALLETTA 2041

1. SUMMARY: MINTOFF IN SPEECH OCT 13 FOR FIRST
TIME TAKES PUBLIC ISSUE WITH BRITISH CONTROL OVER
INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND ELECTRONIC
MEDIA AS WELL AS BRITISH FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS IN
MALTA. GOM IS IN ACTIVE NEGOTIATIONS WITH BRITISH
COMPANY OWNING RADIO AND TELEVISION FACILITIES.
END SUMMARY

2. IN CONVERSATION OCT 16 WITH BRITISH HIGH
COMMISSIONER, WE FOUND THAT HIS REACTION TO MINTOFF'S
SPEECH AT LABOR PARTY RALLY OCT 13 WAS GENERALLY
PARALLEL TO OURS. ONLY SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE WAS
IN SIZE OF CROWD WHICH HIS PEOPLE ESTIMATE AT 4,000,
AND ON REFLECTION WE ARE INCLINED TO AGREE. BRITISH
DID HOWEVER, SHARE OUR VIEW THAT MINTOFF'S RECEPTION
WAS NOT PARTICULARLY ENTHUSIASTIC.

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3. AMBASSADOR NOTED THAT MINTOFF WAS NOW MAKING PUBLIC ISSUE OF CONTINUED FOREIGN OWNERSHIP, I.E., U.K. OWNERSHIP OF RADIO, TELEVISION, EXTERNAL CABLE FACILITIES, LARGEST COMMERCIAL BANK ON MALTA AND INSURANCE COMPANIES.

4. MORETON AGREED THAT THIS INDICATED MINTOFF WAS PREPARING TO ESCALATE THESE QUESTIONS. HE SAID THAT IN FACT REDIFFUSION, WHICH CONTROLS RADIO AND TELEVISION, APPEARS TO BE MINTOFF'S HIGHEST PRIORITY, AND REDIFFUSION COMPANY HAS BEEN IN ACTIVE NEGOTIATIONS WITH GOM. REDIFFUSION HAS PROPOSED A JOINT VENTURE OR COMPANY IN WHICH MALTESE WOULD HOLD SIGNIFICANT INTERESTS. AT ONE POINT THEY SUGGESTED 40 PERCENT EACH FOR GOM AND REDIFFUSION, WITH 20PERCENT HELD BY PRIVATE MALTESE SHAREHOLDERS. GOM HOWEVER SEEMS INCLINED TO ACTUAL TAKEOVER OF COMPANY AND ORGANIZATION OF GOM CORPORATION. WHEN I ASKED ABOUT COMPENSATION IN CASE OF NATIONALIZATION, GOM AT FIRST INDICATED NONE WOULD BE PAID. THEY HAVE LATER, HOWEVER, BACKED AWAY FROM SUCH EXTREME POSITION. REDIFFUSION ESTIMATES VALUE OF PROPERTY ON MALTA AT ON MILLION POUNDS. MORETON DOES NOT KNOW WHEN A DEFINITIVE MOVE WOULD BE MADE, BUT WOULD NOT BE SURPRISED IF IT WOULD COME SOON.

5. CABLE AND WIRELESS IS NOT NOW IN ACTIVE NEGOTIAION. C&W MADE OFFER TO GOM FOR JOINT COMPANY ABOUT A YEAR AGO BUT THERE HAS BEEN NO ANSWER. MORETON HAD NO INFORMATION ON BARCLAYS BANK SITUATION OR BRITISH INSURANCE COMPANIES OTHER THAN AWARENESS THAT MINTOFF IS UNHAPPY.

6. LASTLY, MORETON VOLUNTEERED THAT TWO BRITONS WHO ARE STILL WORKING IN DOCKYARD MANAGEMENT CLAIM THAT FIGURES RECENTLY MADE PUBLIC ON DRAMATIC IMPROVEMENT WERE "COOKED UP" AND THAT SITUATION IS NOT NEARLY AS ROSY AS DEPICTED. HE PROMISED TO PASS ON ANY SPECIFIC INFORMATION THAT MIGHT COME HIS WAY.

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7. COMMENT: AS WE HAVE REPORTED BEFORE, MINTOFF'S VIEWS ON RADIO, TELEVISION AND CABLE AND WIRELESS ARE NOT SURPRISING WHEN HE LOOKS AT PPT AND OTHER GOVERNMENT CONTROL OF SUCH FACILITIES IN WESTERN COUNTRIES.
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